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# Effective Vocabulary Instruction And Study Strategies For Adult EFL Learners

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EFFECTIVE VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION AND STUDY STRATEGIES FOR  
ADULT EFL LEARNERS

By

Daniel Todd Place

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in English as a Second Language.

Hamline University

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To the past and present Universidad de la Sierra Sur Centro de Idiomas staff whose continuous interest, encouragement, and support ensured that I completed the course work and capstone project in a timely manner.

“There is no one best way for EFL learners to study and learn vocabulary”  
-Dixon. L.Q

“No one best way.”  
-Dixon L.Q

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.....	8
Chapter Summery.....	11
Chapter Overviews.....	11
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review .....	13
Introduction.....	13
Needs of adult ESL students.....	13
Importance of Vocabulary Development .....	18
Effective vocabulary instruction methods.....	18
Strategy Training for Vocabulary study.....	25
Conclusion .....	28
CHAPTER THREE: Project Description .....	30
Introduction.....	30
Setting and Participants .....	30
Relavent Standards.....	31
Reasons for Curriculum Design.....	32
Lesson and Unit Outcomes .....	33
Instruction and Support Material.....	35
Assessment.....	37
Information and Instruction.....	42
Project Contributions.....	43
Conclusion.....	44
CHAPTER FOUR: Reflection and Conclusion.....	45

Introduction.....	45
Chapter Overview.....	45
Learnings throughout the process.....	46
Implications and Limitations.....	47
Further research possibilities.....	48
Results Communication.....	49
Contribution to Adult EFL Education Programs .....	50
Conclusion.....	50
REFERENCES .....	52



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to discover based on research what effective vocabulary instruction strategies help English as a foreign language (EFL) students retain vocabulary items outside of the classroom. The other question is what are some affective vocabulary study strategies to teach EFL students that will help them retain vocabulary items outside of the classroom?

I teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to university students in Miahuatlan de Porfirio Diaz in Oaxaca Mexico with an estimated 32,000 inhabitants. The approximately 850 students study one of six different subjects. In order to graduate and earn their degree each student is required to pass seven semesters of English with at least 60% and earn at least 450 points on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. The students come from different parts of Mexico and are at different levels of English proficiency. Some start at UNSIS and are able to advance out of a beginner class because they speak one of the local languages at home or have relatives who only speak an indigenous language like Zapotec, or Mixtec, so they know an indigenous language, speak Spanish at home and with friends, and are learning English as a third language. Another reason students may come to the university is that they spent many school years in the United States and have family who live in the United States, so they have gained exposure to English that way. Those with previous exposure and language learning skills are often excited to begin studying English at the university level.

The majority of students who start learning English only communicate in Spanish for a number of reasons. One such reason is that the education system in Oaxaca state is

unstable in many different ways. For starters, from primary school through high school not all the students attend classes continually, mostly due to their school teachers striking. Another quite substantial reason students' English skills may be lacking is that they don't have classes from Native English speakers, or their school teachers don't speak any English at all. So, even though the students are attending English classes, they only study very basic grammar and aren't taught how to speak. They are not equipped to understand or recognize anything they read or hear in English. A majority of the students start university without basic conversation in English, but progress through each semester. However, at the beginning of the next semester, as they review the material learned in the previous semester, the students seem like they are hearing English, or the English concept, for the very first time. Many students have expressed that they can read in English, but they don't always understand what is said when they are listening to English. My colleagues and I often hear "¿Como se dice \_\_\_\_\_ en Ingles?" and I will tell them, then within five seconds of me telling them, they forget what I said. The students' lack of retention suggests that their struggles with listening activities aren't as related to listening as they are with the students' lack of useable vocabulary, partly because of the lack of English they are exposed to in a town of 20 native English speakers, and the sparse non-native English speaking population of Miahuatlan.

To help the students improve their vocabulary retention and make their English learning more efficient, I had them take a vocabulary quiz where they had to give the English equivalent of a Spanish word. I didn't expect them to get many correct, as I hadn't formally taught the vocabulary items. Between instruction and taking a post instruction quiz, I told the students to study the words, their notes, and the pre- instruction

quiz, then complete a survey telling what study-strategies they used or didn't use. From that activity I found some key information about my students. First and foremost, I discovered that to some extent students do study the vocabulary and material that they are given. The other thing I noted is that across all seven semesters there are about 20 to 25 students who utilize very common vocabulary study strategies. So, of 850 students, studying at UNSIS, at least 200 of them are using very common and effective vocabulary study strategies.

With that in mind, vocabulary development and long-term retention are essential elements for my university students for the foreign language classroom and the society and culture where the language is used. Naeimi (2015) and Foo cite Richards and Renandya who say that "a proficient command of vocabulary is essential when speaking or listening to someone else" (Naeimi p.142). Haidi (2017) expands on Richards and Renandya's point, asserting that vocabulary is not only important for understanding and being understood, but also for the other language aspect of grammar and the four classroom skills speaking, listening, reading, and writing, listening. From what Haidi (2017) says, it can be asserted that vocabulary plays a role in understanding what you hear or read and being understood whether in spoken or written word. More recent and specific research by Alquahtani(2015) states that "vocabulary is a critical tool for second language learning and foreign language learning"(Alquahtani p. 26). This article also states very astutely that "vocabulary knowledge enables language use and thus language use encourages vocabulary growth." (Alquahtani p.26). Hu and Nasaji also say that "a learner's vocabulary size is a great predictor of the level of success the learner will have in learning and being able to use their target language" (Hu Nasaji p. 28). Perez and

Alvira also emphasize that vocabulary is essential for language proficiency, comprehension, and on the same note, comprehensibility. This paragraph contains substantial information about the importance of vocabulary development and thus shows how closely connected vocabulary development is to the language skills and future target language proficiency. With my students' vocabulary skills in mind, and the importance of those skills, the two questions that this project and literature review seeks to answer are with the students doing what they do outside of the EFL classroom to study vocabulary, what are effective ways I can train the students to make their vocabulary study time more efficient? How can I implement that training into an hour-long class?

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I have explained about my students' language-learning experience in public schools and their multilingual home life or lack thereof. I also explained where they may have acquired some of their already existing English language skills. Following an extensive introduction, I explained some of their vocabulary study habits acquired as a result of research that I had my students participate in. I conclude the chapter by very briefly explaining some of the importance of vocabulary development before immersion into an environment where English is predominantly spoken.

### **Chapter Overviews**

In the first section of chapter two, I explain some of the differing needs of adult ESL learners as a population. The second section explains the importance of vocabulary study strategies and study strategy training in EFL classrooms worldwide based on more current and in-depth research. With a deeper understanding of that importance I proceed to section three where I explain some common instruction strategies that current literature

recommends using in EFL classrooms to help EFL students remember vocabulary they learn during formal instruction. In the fourth and final section, I used research to explain some activities for the EFL classroom that train students in more affective and enjoyable activities they can use to study and learn new vocabulary items outside of the EFL classroom.

In chapter three I provide information about my students in their 5<sup>th</sup> semester of English (English 5) that uses chapters 9 to 16 of the second Interchange textbook. I explain the vocabulary that the students were going to see, both in the said chapter and on the end of five or six-week written exam (Partial written exam). As part of the project I explain different vocabulary teaching activities, methods, and techniques I use, and other teachers could use, in their classrooms. At the end, also based on research, I explain some ways to train students in the use of research-recommended strategies to use outside of the EFL classroom to review and reinforce vocabulary learning to improve vocabulary retention.

In the final chapter I will explain what I learned about vocabulary teaching and development. I will also reflect on my future expectations for conducting vocabulary research based on literature reviews and my personal experience and future vocabulary instruction expectations for my students. I then explain how and where I can explain the results and any limitations and finally how this paper and unit design can contribute to the field of adult EFL education. I will conclude with a reflection on my experience in conducting this capstone research and designing this instructional unit template.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

This literature review seeks to answer two questions. Based on current research with the students doing what they do outside of the EFL classroom to study vocabulary. What are effective ways I can help adult ESL students improve their vocabulary? The other question is, how can instructors train their students to use in- class vocabulary activities to outside of class to make their vocabulary study time more efficient? This chapter begins with an explanation of how adult English as a Second Language learners are, some common needs they usually have, what expectations they have for ESL instruction, and why they are taking ESL whether the class takes place at a church, community center, community or junior college, library, or even at a public school. The second section explains what research has found as reasons as why vocabulary development is important in ESL education for adult learners. The third section identifies and provides brief descriptions of vocabulary instruction techniques that can be used in adult ESL instruction settings. Some are intended for use with children learning ESL but can be easily adapted to fit into adult or university students' program of study. Chapter two concludes with some explanation of how classroom activities can be instructed and practiced in the classroom so that learners can replicate them outside of the classroom to help them retain and use the vocabulary beyond the classroom confidently.

#### **Needs of Adult EFL learners**

Adult ESL learners like children ESL learners have needs. Needs of younger students include a stimulating environment, an instructor who enjoys them and

understands how they think and needs safety, shelter as well as other needs that they may not be aware of. Adults on the other hand bring very specific needs to their ESL instruction sessions. Finn (2011), which focused primarily on Latin American and Asian learners, explains that adults' reason for taking a class is largely career related, as without English skills the people, who enter the United States in search of work, can't find jobs other than French fry cook or hamburger flipper at fast food restaurant where they are able to communicate in their native tongue. Other adult students come to class sessions with the intention of improving themselves to help them function and succeed in the second language culture and environment. Young learners' needs to learn English may coincide with their need to get their parents off their backs. Finn (2011) very clearly explains that adults are self-directed instead of needing round the clock supervision and entertainment like children. Adults can also draw from a more vast selection of life experiences and those would be more accurate experiences that would add to the class conversation and/or discussion. Adults also have more control over their social roles and thus could be more willing to learn in the classroom. Adults' learning is centered on a specific goal like helping their children with daily homework, communicating needs in the community, adults are also more internally motivated to learn as a result of the problems that Finn (2011) mentioned earlier. Most importantly and most specifically to the adult ESL classroom is the need of adults to know why they need to learn what they are learning in class. Finn (2004) also identifies some common needs that the general population of adult ESL learners brings to the class.

Crandall and Sheppard also identify some groups of adult ESL students by their legal status. They continue by explaining their specific needs and goals for a result of

learning English. Crandall begins with the adult ESL students. These students are defined as being older than 18 years of age. They usually learn at community colleges or other academic institutions via high school equivalent education or earning a GED certificate, and their goals tend to be focused on possible citizenship, and employment. Crandall defines Generation 1.5 learners as people who don't speak English as their native tongue but have attended college or other institutions of higher learning in the United States can understand and produce English orally but need more help to improve their writing skills to be successful in the higher education environments. The two groups of adult ESL learners that Crandall has mentioned are closely related to living the United States where English is used regularly. The next two groups have goals of moving to the United States to study but will also probably return to their country of origin. The first group consists of international *students*. These students have student visas and have come for intensive English exposure through formal instruction and exposure to English used in their new community. Another international English learners are in a group entitled *world English speakers*. World English speakers according to Crandall (2011), speak a different variety of English other than Standard American English and these students tend to have limited prior educational background if they have any at all. Crandall's final group are comprised of *ESL Literacy Students*. ESL literacy students have little prior education either in their country of origin or in the United States and as a result have very minimal English proficiency or fluency and may need further instruction to improve their abilities in reading and writing. Crandall concludes by reiterating what Finn explained about the common needs of adult ESL learners. Those adult ESL students' needs and motivations most-prominently include job related needs



and personal advancement to help the learner function in the English speaking community by possible means of citizenship.

Lambert (2009) explains some specific of adult students enrolled in higher education institutions. Some common reasons adults enroll in ESL instruction, as others have explained, include improving their family lives, to make civic involvement more feasible, and to have better work lives and maybe eventually attain a higher-level career or higher-level employment. Lambert (2009) also explains that the common idea, which may be more of a misconception, that after a certain age like 15 learning another language is close to impossible. Speaking for some adult ESL students Lambert explains that that idea may not be as true as once thought.

Eyring (2014) emphasizes that, specifically in California, many adult ESL learners come to specific programs with limited education usually from not completing high school which could be related to a learning disorder or difficulty. Like those mentioned above, Eyring (2014) also explains that these students are looking for improved employment conditions which could lead to citizenship applications at a later date which greatly depends on the person's ability to survive and function in the predominantly English speaking environment.

Finally, Mathews-Aydinli (2008) points out some needs of adults in general that aren't specific to ESL learners. This article explains that there is a much bigger age range in populations of adult learners'. In one class there could be five or six people in their early 30's (between ages 30 and 35) and then in the same class there could be at least eight students in their late 80's (between ages 85 and 89) which brings its advantages and disadvantages. A great advantage is that, these students have a great deal

of information, educational background, and experiences to offer during class discussions. More specifically to the ESL population, there are more classes these adult can choose from. The students can select to participate in college preparation classes to prepare them for higher education in an English language environment or, having just completed high school, they can prepare for a college education. If continued schooling and academic English does not meet the people's needs, the learner can choose to participate in workforce preparation programs where they work with English that will help them be successful in their occupation. There are very specialized industry specific ESL classes that allow for quicker learning and may pay the worker to learn English that will help them in the workplace.

This section of the literature review has explained who adult ESL learners are and how their needs differ from the needs of school-aged learners. It has explained that many adult learners have longer attention spans and don't need to be entertained during the entire duration of class. The adult learners also come in with very specific expectations for class sessions and they are choosing to attend classes and are paying money for the instruction.

They also have very specific reasons for taking the class. Some common reasons for attending instruction sessions include; improving employment opportunities, enabling them to complete any encountered paperwork, enabling them to communicate with their children's teachers who only speak English or have limited proficiency in the persons' first or native language. Those are just some the important reasons for adult students attending ESL classes. The next section of this chapter explains why vocabulary development is an important aspect to an adult ESL instruction system.

### **Importance of Vocabulary Study Strategies**

Alquehtani (2015) starts by using substantial research to underscore the importance of teaching vocabulary, she cites Norbit Schmitt's (2000) article which states that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence in second and foreign languages. She also cites Nation's (2005) article, which asserts that "vocabulary knowledge enables language use and thus in turn language use encourages vocabulary growth." Alquehtani also explains some classroom activities that will engage the students and with adequate training EFL students will be able to use on their own to increase their vocabulary skills beyond the classroom. Alquehtani examines vocabulary skills and study strategies specifically for use in the EFL classroom.

B. Wilcox (2013) approaches the subject from a social standpoint. Wilcox states that "words summarize symbols that have meanings which societies have agreed upon collectively". Harmon J.M approaches the question regarding the importance of foreign language vocabulary from the reading comprehension perspective as she cites Nation (2001) and asserts that "knowing more words enhances comprehension, reading, and understanding of texts which in turn builds vocabulary knowledge" (Harmon, p. 100).

### **Effective Vocabulary Instruction Methods**

Many articles that explain vocabulary strategy instruction also agree on some principles and express the principles in different manners. To begin, Wilcox (2013) emphasizes that environment, exposure, engagement, and experience combined into multiple instruction sessions will enhance and improve students' success in vocabulary retention. Norbitt Schmitt agrees with Wilcox in his article as he asserts that the most effective vocabulary instruction activities offer the students as much repeated exposure

and engagement as possible. A common idea has held that second language learning could be just as easy as learning a first language. Many teachers have used English only and let students learn and study vocabulary through what Shmitt (2008), File and Adams (2010), and Amiryousefi (2010) call incidental vocabulary instruction. Incidental vocabulary instruction expects students to study and learn new words as they encounter them. All of the authors mentioned above strongly agree that language and vocabulary learning, particularly in a foreign language environment where students have little to no language exposure, is far more effective through the use of explicit vocabulary instruction and intentional vocabulary study. As a result of explicit instruction and intentional study, students' success in word recognition, use, and response in different situations will drastically improve.

There are many different instructional tools a teacher can use to emphasize Wilcox (2013) explains the four E's of vocabulary instruction and increase their students' chances for success by providing repeated exposure to vocabulary items, be they in a reading passage or a list of words. the students see in the back of each unit in their English textbook like one in the *Interchange* series of textbooks.

Alquahtani (2015) explains a tried and true method of introducing new vocabulary and reinforcing vocabulary learning, and that is by using realia and visual aids. For example, in a beginner level functioning class about grocery shopping, the instructor can teach the necessary questions and answers and to help students learn the names of items they are looking for they can use pictures, real, or plastic representations of the items. She also explains that to help visual aids be more effective, teachers can

also draw pictures on the white or blackboard, or use colored photographs to explain an item or concept.

If the concept is part of a continuum Alquahtani (2015) also explains that contrasts that demonstrate similarities or differences can be useful. For example when teaching big, medium, and small, an instructor can use students in the class, or pictures that show the differences between the three. A teacher can also use a big class room, a medium sized teacher desk, and a small backpack to make the differences very clear and concrete to the students. She finally explains that mimes and actions are also useful for when the instructor is less than proficient in the students' native language or wants to minimize the students' use of their native language.

Foil (2002) continues the discussion about effective vocabulary classroom instruction techniques and ideas when he explains that teachers use pantomime and more importantly students are asked to repeat the word and use pantomime to reinforce the word's definition and pronunciation. Pantomime also helps other students learn and recognize how words sound with a visual representation to accompany it. From there, in order to get the students more involved, Foil (2002) suggests encouraging students to perform skits in which as they use the vocabulary they perform the action/mime as learned in class. To engage the students in the audience even more, the students could be encouraged to mime the word during their classmates' skits as they hear the target vocabulary items.

The instructional strategies previously mentioned are very useful for in-class instruction when there are set vocabulary lists for students to study. In this section I explain some important strategies an EFL teacher can use when helping students look at a

reading passage or understanding and identifying meaning in listening passages. Wilcox (2013) suggests previewing either kind of text to give students an idea of what words to look for or what known words to apply to help them clarify the meaning of the passage in its entirety.

Harmon (2010) also says students can use the cognitive vocabulary approach where students identify unfamiliar words in a passage, examine word meaning; given by a definition in the target language or a direct translation, and finally relate the word's meaning to the rest of the passage to enhance passage understanding. As an immediate post-reading activity or for future reading exercises students can be encouraged to hold cubes with vocabulary words in the air when they encounter previously read words later in the passage or in passages they read after encountering the vocabulary item for the first time.

The vocabulary suggestions presented in the next two paragraphs relate less to gleaning definitions, based on context and more so toward associating words' spelling with word meanings and exploring how words are related. Wilcox (2013) and Foil (2002) explain a vocabulary introduction technique called "semantic mapping". In semantic mapping, students either read or hear words and, based on a definition or translation, think of related words in English which the instructor will write on a surface that students can refer to at a later time. Semantic mapping is related to reading or listening texts. So in the next step students read the passage again and look for more unfamiliar words to add to the already existing list of unfamiliar words. After the students have a relatively extensive list of about 15 to 20 words, they can form new lists for example based on parts of speech or other categories related to the reading. The parts

of speech lists can include a list for nouns, verbs, adjectives, etcetera that allow the students to move the words around between lists based on vocabulary they read and learn in other reading passages. Semantic Mapping is useful for boosting students' vocabulary and demonstrating how words are related and can change based on context.

Wilcox (2013) also recommends a five step approach. In the five step approach students are first divided into smaller groups. In their groups students read through a passage and look for unfamiliar words in texts. After the groups have a list of words, the whole class comes together to discuss and compare what unfamiliar words they found as a class. With either lists in small groups or as a whole class the students practice using all the words on their lists and agree on working definitions for each word based on instructor guidance. After the class has decided on working definitions, the students are asked to copy the word in their notebooks and on a classroom vocabulary list to ensure repeated engagement with the vocabulary item.

Semantic mapping is good for us inside the classroom but very few students enjoy sitting in a classroom listening to teachers talking at them all the time. Blachowicz (2005) outlines a very clear and engaging process that grabs and keeps the students' attention, and keeps the conversation going. That experience is called *the vocabulary field trip*. For a successful visit, successful planning is essential, It's also important to have read aloud and previewed the reading passages beforehand and have an effective visual be it a powerpoint slide or a picture on a life size poster board. During the vocabulary visit Blackowicz (2005) explains that students can either talk with classmates about words that they know that are related to the topic or they can have a list of familiar words related to the topic which they will bring to a group discussion. For example for a

vocabulary visit about the planet Earth, in small groups or as a whole class the students' lists might include, planet, life, water, people as well as others words which may vary depending on age, experience, and knowledge.

After compiling a list of words related to the topic, the teacher and students will read a text together and the students must react somehow when they read or hear a word they have identified either by giving some thumbs up, raising their hands, or holding up a vocabulary cube showing how the word is spelled. The modes of reaction can be decided on as a class or can be decided and assigned by the teacher. The whole class must complete this process with four or five other readings related to the same topic with the same vocabulary items. The students may add related words to the list as the activities continue.

Instructors are always cautioned against using the students' first language or languages (L1) in the classroom too frequently, especially if the students' English class is the extent of their exposure to English. However, if the instructor is proficient in the students' first language, he or she should feel free to use it with a clear and explicable purpose in mind. Whether the vocabulary is from a prescribed list or related to reading or listening passages, Thornbury (2002) says that translation from the students' L1 into English can be very useful for incidental vocabulary instruction or checking the students' reading comprehension of a passage. For example, if while reading a passage, together as a class or during independent reading, if many students encounter the same word and inquire about its meaning then the teacher should explain said word to the entire class.

Folse (2006) and Rossiter (2016) also recommend that students use vocabulary notebooks to aide reinforcement inside and outside the classroom. The easiest way to



help students, especially those without computers, phones, or Internet access is to have access to their first language (L1) to help connect meaning between languages involved.

To aide in reinforcement Manyak (2009) also expresses that the use of cognates, which are words that are spelled and pronounced similarly in the students' L1 and English is very useful in ensuring retention and building the students' confidence and command of English. Cognates are useful when looking at vocabulary lists in pre-reading activities. To prepare the students to read texts and help them gain confidence while reading, it is helpful to compile a list of cognates that are found in the text and have students repeat them multiple times to ensure that they can be easily recognized within the text.

However, Jung (2016) explains that when combining grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension instruction into one class period or activity, glossing can “significantly facilitate vocabulary learning” based on the overall positive effects it has shown on students' success in vocabulary retention. Through the use of glossing, either orally by the teacher or in writing by the students, the students are given more responsibility for remembering direct translations, figuring out for themselves how English grammar and syntax works, figuring out how English's syntax may differ from that of their L1's, and finally and rather importantly, that sometimes there is no translation between their two languages.

In the two previous sections, research about vocabulary instruction has explored how teachers can introduce vocabulary items from specific lists through the use of the students' background knowledge, group definitions, the black or white board, and other classroom technology. The previous section also explained how written text passages

can help raise students' awareness of unfamiliar words, how letters' sounds combine to form a word, and some ideas about how translating between a student's L1 and English using glosses can help students understand grammatical concepts as well as how certain vocabulary words are related on a sentence and a passage level. On many occasions, students have done very well in their proficiency in the classroom during a class period, but by the next class period their ability to communicate in English is greatly lacking. That having been said, the next and final section of this chapter explains some ways teachers can encourage students to use the activities in which they participate in the EFL classroom when they study vocabulary outside of class.

### **Strategy Training for Vocabulary Study**

In any skill that one is practicing a common expression says "if you don't use it, you lose it." That quote also holds true in all aspects of language acquisition grammar, speaking, listening, reading, writing, and vocabulary. Alquehtani (2015) states that "teachers want students to remember vocabulary" (2015, p.26) and Dixon (2012) reiterates "There is no best way to teach or instruct on vocabulary" (2012, p.36). There isn't one vocabulary study strategy that is going to work with every student all of the time. Alquehtani (2015) explains some strategies like drawing on a board as a way for students to quiz each other or to play charades with the vocabulary learned during formal instruction. As any skill to be practiced outside of the classroom will need clear instruction and vocabulary study activities are no exception. Some activities will need more explanation and practice than others for students to feel comfortable recreating them.

Vocabulary notebook use, with English and the L1 translation, as Walters and Bozkurt (2009), Amiryousefi (2010), Folse (2011), and Rossiter (2016) suggest, is quite self-explanatory as is studying flash cards with English on one side and either an L1 translation and a picture or just a picture on the other side. In this strategy students see the English written word on one side of an index card and must know how to say that word in their L1. The student may also see the word written in their L1 and must recall how to say the same word in English. Strategies that involve just the written word and no visual representation will require some strategy use instruction that can be easily integrated into a grammar or pronunciation lesson.

Baniadelrahmen (2014) article cite useful and easy strategies like using mnemonic devices to remember a word's definition in English or a translation from the L1 that can be used while the student tries to recall either the English translation or the L1 equivalent. They also recommend analyzing words based on their components like the root word and any and all affixes that can be easily integrated into a grammar or pronunciation lesson as well.

Rossiter (2016) explains that there are various kinds of dictionaries that students can use as well such as: bilingual dictionaries, that provide English and an L1 translation or they can use bilingual dictionaries with words and definitions in both languages. There are also different applications that students can download on their mobile electronic devices.

This chapter has provided a foundation for the following section of this capstone. The first section provides a context for instructors, that explains who adult ESL learners are, their needs, and their expectations for class sessions. It began by explaining some

very general needs that adult ESL learners have. Next it explains who a majority of the students are as far as family or where immigration status is concerned. The section concludes by explaining how adult learners differ from children learners specifically in the ESL classroom.

The second section explained the importance of vocabulary strategy development for EFL learners. The information begins with Alquehtani (2015) explaining Schmitt's belief that lexical development is important for developing communicative competence in any language at any age. It also expresses Nation's (2011) idea that vocabulary knowledge enables language use which thus encourages vocabulary growth. Other authors and experts on the subject also explore vocabulary development's importance from more specific perspectives like society as a whole and to improve classroom skills.

In the third section the research explains some important elements in vocabulary instruction inside the classroom. A majority of the section explains the processes of some common instruction and practice activities like semantic mapping, vocabulary field trips, the use of the students' L1 in the classroom, cognate use, and glossing. As a bridge to the final section about strategy use training for outside of the classroom, the third section concludes by explaining that some strategies and techniques are self-explanatory while others may require instruction and classroom practice. However, the authors have explained them because these strategies are tried and true and show that students enjoy them and can use them themselves outside of the EFL classroom while, other instruction strategies, even for vocabulary instruction and practice, are classroom specific and would

require an environment where the learner must become the teacher and have a large amount of students to practice and study with.

### **Conclusion**

The final part of this chapter explains that there are some vocabulary study strategies that are self-explanatory and the students can understand and adapt for themselves as they study independently or with their classmates like using vocabulary notebooks with translations, different kinds of dictionaries, Google Translate to use pronunciation and translation among other tools for translation and language study. This section also explains that there are some vocabulary study strategies that require a specific reading passage, a larger number of students to study with, and more training and practice to be as effective as a simpler study strategy like the difference between semantic mapping being too complex and involved or taking vocabulary field trips, which need specialized classroom materials. Instead of going that in depth, a student using his or her vocabulary notebooks to study independently is far easier than another classroom or full class activity.

In the next chapter, I use the research on vocabulary instruction strategies and adult students' vocabulary study strategies presented in this literature review, to answer my research questions and write about a semester long unit which will include sample plans of instruction and materials that any adult or university ESL instructor can utilize with any adult or university EFL students in the classroom to improve students' vocabulary and useful vocabulary study strategies that the students can use to figure out words on their own with minimal to no training. Chapter three also explains that instructors may have to instruct students on, or help the students practice certain

strategies in class before students are comfortable enough using the vocabulary study strategy independently to help them have as much success as possible.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Project Description**

#### **Introduction**

Using the articles mentioned in the previous chapter, this chapter will answer these research questions. What are effective ways I can help adult ESL students improve their vocabulary? The other question is, how can instructors train their students to use in-class vocabulary activities outside of class to make their vocabulary study time more efficient? In this chapter I will explain who my unit of instruction is intended for, and relevant grammar and vocabulary standards the target audience must meet to score well on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. I will also describe Wiggins and Mctighe's (2011) Understanding by Design template and why I chose to use it to design my unit of instruction for English 5 university students. I conclude this chapter by explaining modes of evaluation, instruction strategies, and support materials I will use in classroom instruction.

#### **Setting and Participants**

The unit included in this project is intended for adult English language learners (ELL) or ELLs attending a university English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs. This specific project is intended for University Students in Miahuatlan de Porfirio Diaz, Oaxaca Mexico. The students, from different parts of Oaxaca, Mexico, are living in Miahuatlan while they attend university for assorted disciplines. The intended students are (a) in their fifth semester of university study or (b) are adequately proficient in English to understand concepts and material covered in fifth semester of English classes. Each class session meets for fifty minutes a

day Monday through Friday. The students' fifty minute English class is the only consistent exposure to English the students receive every day.

### **Relevant Standards**

There are nine semesters of English study in the Universidad de la Sierra Sur (UN SIS) English program. Each semester is based around four classroom skills *Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing*. Grammar and vocabulary tie into the four skills. Each semester is divided into three partials which ends with a written assessment that counts as fifty percent of each student's partial grade. Each partial grade counts for 20% of each student's semester grade.

The English 5 listening comprehension objectives include students being able to listen to people talking about changes in their lives and possibilities for their future. The second listening comprehension objective is for students to be able to listen to people talk about their job preferences and why they would or wouldn't be suited for a specific occupation. The listening objectives for the second partial include students being able to answer questions about vacations and experiences, information about different countries, and different people's opinions of books and movies. The listening comprehension objectives for the third partial include identifying a problem and who caused said problem, and identify advice given to resolve the issue, and invitations extended and excuses offered. The listening comprehension objectives for English 5 also coincide with reading comprehension of mid length to long reading passages.

To link what students hear and must answer questions about and to help them produce the language orally, I will focus on the following objectives for speaking.

Students will compare time periods and explain change. The students will also improve



their skills in describing abilities and personality traits related to job preferences. Spoken vocabulary in the second partial is related to describing continents and counties, identifying and describing their favorite movies and books, and finally explaining opinions and reacting to someone else's opinion. In the third partial the students will practice speculating about past events based on evidence or clues, speculate about possible future events, also based on evidence. The students will describe a predicament and give advice, report what has been said or asked, and make excuses.

### **Reason for Curriculum Design**

I'm constructing an instructional unit, so I can better implement vocabulary instruction and teach the students to use the vocabulary study strategies outside of the formal EFL classroom. The instructional unit covers many different grammar and vocabulary topics which lend themselves to various forms of practice and evaluation methods. Those evaluation methods include, class activities, projects, and written exams that evaluate the students' use and command of the language topics, concepts, and skills.

For this project I use a template adapted from Wiggins and McTighe's (2011) Understanding By Design guide to creating high-quality units. I am using the template for a couple of reasons. First I am using this adapted template because it is easy to follow. The template consists of three main parts. The first part relates to the desired results of the complete class, in my case English 5. The template includes skills students are expected be able to do as a result of their learning. There are also conceptual and grammatical things students are supposed to understand and there are things that students should be able to do as a result of instruction. The second section of the template is related to evidence that shows that the students are able to perform certain skills and

understand the required concepts. The third section of the template includes a brief summary of learning activities that happen in the classroom. The description can be as brief or as detailed as the instructor constructing the unit wants it to be. I think it important to note that the more detailed the description the easier the template will be to use for someone else using. Finally, and most specifically Oaxaca state, I am constructing this unit using this template because most Mexican English teachers don't have any learning objectives for English. Any objective templates schools in Oaxaca do use would probably have been adapted from the United States of America schools or international school. It is probable that the nonnative Mexican English teachers, who teach English, would use what objective unit template they grew up with or have researched and are comfortable with.

### **Lesson and Unit Outcomes**

As I mentioned earlier, each semester is divided into three partials that have their own objectives. At the end of the first partial the students are expected to be able to listen to people compare changes between the past and the present. They are also expected to answer questions about future possibilities. After some listening and reading comprehension practice the students are expected to discuss the same topics about themselves. English 5 discusses modal verbs that talk about possibilities using "might". So, to continue practicing, the students then study the use of "might" in "if" clauses" with possible events and consequences. The students need to be able to recognize these statements in written form and produce simple versions of these statements on their own written and orally. The first partial concludes with students practicing agreeing and

disagreeing with one another using expressions taken from the second Interchange Student book chapter 10.

The second partial shifts its focus from modal auxiliary verbs to present and past participles. The first unit concentrates on the passive voice using *be* verbs and the past participles. It also examines directional words, continent and country names, and landmarks in the different continents and countries. In the second unit the students are expected to tell stories using the past simple and the past continuous with continuous actions and interrupting events. They are also expected to be able to answer how long something happened in a listening comprehension activity and tell how long something has been happening or how long someone has been doing something using *for* and *since* when necessary. The assessment section explains the stories and movies the students will produce. In the final unit of the second partial, the students must understand that present participles as adjectives like *frightening* are used to describe things and past participles as adjectives like *frightened* describe people's emotional state. To form a comprehensive project the students are expected to describe their favorite books or movies. Both the story and the movie projects are explained in the section about assessment.

The third partial emphasizes expressing unknown ideas and events. The students must be able to use many different modal auxiliary verbs to talk about people's gestures, facial expressions, and signs posted in their environment to tell what gestures or pictures might mean. The students must also understand that different modal auxiliary verbs can express different ideas like *permission*, *obligation*, and *prohibition*. The students will then study *would* and practice explaining problems and give advice to explain what they would do in similar situations. At the very end of the semester the students will practice

telling what other people asked for, what they talked about using various forms of *said*, *asked*, and *told* and finally extending invitations and giving excuses.

### **Instruction and Support Materials**

Something I really like about teaching English at my university in Mexico is that I am allowed to teach and use the resources that I want to use. The only thing I have to do is teach the material that the students are going to see on the written exams at the end of the partial and course. I am preparing the students to do well on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), while also preparing the students to be able to function in a world where they are going to hear English and be expected to communicate in English. In the English 5 classroom I use the second *Interchange* book chapters nine through sixteen. I use the two or three grammar boxes in every chapter and the vocabulary lists that accompany each chapter. I also use the listening activities to help the students recognize the vocabulary items and the grammar structures covered in the chapters. I use different instructional methods for different things. I frequently use listen and repeat for English 1 and English 2. For English 5, I have the students read in the book and form examples for themselves. If there are set vocabulary items or expressions for a given topic like countries or gestures I use identify, listen, and repeat to help the students learn and retain those. I also use gesture and repetition to help the students recognize and understand the meanings. When there are conversations I use those for listening activities and to practice reading and speaking.

A predominant complaint that my colleagues and I have is that, between partials and semesters, a majority of the students aren't able to speak English or remember the vocabulary, concepts, or structures that they studied in their previous English course.

This lack of capability or skill is understandable when students haven't had English instruction for many semesters. However, when students don't remember or understand material covered after one day and having completed a homework assignment using the material that is a problem. To help the students combat that lack of reinforcement, particularly where vocabulary is concerned, there are some things that I would instruct the students to do based on my experience and what various authors recommend. As with any part of learning a language, vocabulary study is a progression. Students must learn to use the present simple tense before they use the present perfect. To begin covering a subject or concept I will show the students the vocabulary items and expressions they will see in each chapter. For homework the students must translate the vocabulary words and expressions that use the words at the beginning of each chapter into Spanish. This can be used with any language. The students see the vocabulary throughout each chapter so, when they encounter it, if they don't know or forget what a word means they can look in the beginning of the chapter and see the word in English and in Spanish. Each night the students have exercises to complete from a workbook. In English 1, I have the students make flash cards so they can study and learn the specific words in English. In English 5 however, the students need to understand how words are used in and fit into expressions. There are many other ways the students can learn the words and expressions such as playing charades, quizzing each other about meanings, looking at pictures and talking about their lives, looking at different places and telling what is there. When students get creative their study habits the sky is the limit. After the students have some grasp on the vocabulary or while they attempt to grasp it, they can work on their partial project to be studying, practicing, and/or using the vocabulary as

they work to complete their project. As they work on their project they can be studying their vocabulary. As they work on workbook activities they can be learning vocabulary that will help them complete their project. They can even translate the the vocabulary at the beginning of the chapter while they look through the chapter trying to form ideas about when and where the vocabulary that they are translating to their L1 can be used. At the end of the day the important thing is that students are improving their skill in English while learning new vocabulary and vocabulary study skills that will help make the rest of their English learning career at UNSIS more efficient and enjoyable.

### **Assessment**

English 5 lasts about fifteen weeks with the occasional day without class and the occasional Saturday of school to replace any unplanned days without class. There are three official partial written exam periods and a final exam day where each student in English 5 takes the same final exam during the same two hour period to ensure no student cheats or gives anyother student an unfair advantage over any other English 5 student. For the third partial the written exam is a project with a written and oral presentation component. During all three partials each chapter in between chapters 9 and 16 in *Interchange two* has a chapter quiz or chapter project. Each week to practice and evaluate reading, speaking, and listening there is a quiz or evaluation of some kind.

The project for the first partial, is about the students' lives before the present time, the students' lives now, and students` future hopes, plans, and ideas for future events. The discussions of events begin with listening practice and a listening quiz after the students have learned about expressions that use the past tense, present tense, and future tense. The students will listen to a text from *Interchange* student Book 2 chapter 9

exercise 5 entitled *For Better or for worse*. For this quiz, the students must identify the expression they hear and answer 6 multiple choice questions about the information in the passage. The project for the end of the partial is the explanation of the students' past experiences, present lives, and future possibilities. The students work on their final partial project for about half of the partial with two drafts for revisions and then a third final product. The students must write three paragraphs using the past, present, and future expressions with the correct verb tense. In the third paragraph the students must write about future possibilities, what their careers might be, and explain why they would or wouldn't be good for different careers. The students' written project will be evaluated based on completion of first, second, and third drafts of the essay. The students' final version will be evaluated based on the grammatical structure, vocabulary, and spelling. They will also receive a point if they submit their final essay on time. There is also an oral presentation which the students must memorize and counts as the students' oral partial one oral exam. The presenter also receives a point if they present when assigned. He or she receives points for the extent to which they are reading during their presentation, correct pronunciation, and correct sentence structure demonstrated during the presentation.

After the students complete their partial one project they take a written exam. The first section of the exam evaluates the students' listening comprehension skills. The students hear four conversations with two comprehension questions based on information in each conversation. The first conversation is about changes in technology where two people are talking about typewriters and laptop computers. The second conversation is about houses, alternatives, and possible future plans. The third conversation is between a

dad and his son talking about potential jobs, job skills, and possibilities. The fourth conversation is between some friends who are talking about jobs and job skills. The next four sections of the exam evaluate the students' command of grammar and sentence structure. In the first grammar section, the students have to look at time expressions and decide which verb form to use. The second grammar section asks the students to provide a consequence or possible events depending on information provided. The third section is a vocabulary section in which the students must match a statement with an expression of agreement or disagreement. The final grammar section is an error identification section, in this section, the student has to read sentences and decide which word or phrase is incorrect. The final section of the exam evaluates reading comprehension about jobs and job skills.

The second partial assessment includes, listening, reading, and a project. In class assessment begins with identification and pronunciation. The students will be evaluated based on their abilities to pronounce and identify directional words like north and south. The directional words will be introduced and practiced during class sessions. During these class sessions the students will see a world map and be asked to identify directions. The same assessment and practice methods will be utilized to help the students identify continents, and countries by their locations and outlines. The second partial entails two projects. The first project is about the continents and countries, an example which can be seen in the project component of this capstone. To complete the project, a group of students with countries in the same continent will describe their continent. The group must explain where the continent is using directional words and tell which countries are on the continent. After the general continent explanation, each student must explain



about one country on that continent. The student must include where the country is located, what languages are spoken in the country, what money is used, and what material, crops, or product is or are made, produced, raised, or grown in the country. The other project has two parts. First, the students have to write a story using the past simple, the past continuous, and the present perfect continuous tenses the students must submit three versions. All three versions will be evaluated for a completion grade and revised as was the partial one project. Only the third version will be evaluated for being typed, using the correct vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The students must also make a movie based on their story. To finish talking about books and movies the oral exam will include questions about what students like, either books or movies, what their favorite book or movie is, what their favorite book or movie is about, and what the student's favorite part of the book or movie is.

The second partial written exam has the same format as the first partial written exam but covers different information. The first conversation is about *The Lord of the Rings* movie. The second conversation is about movie trivia. The third conversation is about theater etiquette. The second section is about grammar beginning with the passive voice. The students must identify the correct past tense passive voice formation and the correct present tense passive voice formation. The next section asks the students to identify if the sentence is better completed using the past simple tense or the past continuous tense based on the words around the missing words. The error identification section uses the present perfect continuous tense and aspect. There is then a short section where the students must identify the correct way to finish the sentence using the correct relative pronoun *who* or *that*. The reading comprehension section is about the life and

accomplishments of I.M Pei. There is also an extra credit section worth up to two points where the students have to correct the errors they see in a sentence provided.

The third partial, as mentioned earlier, doesn't have a written exam instead the students will submit a project and make a presentation that will count as their written exam and oral exam. Not all students will submit the same project. Each group of two or three students will present a conversation based on information in *Interchange* chapters 14, 15, or 16. The students must write and memorize a conversation using the information from an assigned chapter. On presentation day, the student must submit a script with all of the group members' names on it and the grading sheet. For the presentation based on chapter fourteen, the students see a list of rules. They then discuss the different rules and what their meanings. Each partner must ask at least four questions, use at least 6 adjectives with both -ed and -ing endings, and use all of the first five (5) expressions on page T-189 in the Second Interchange Student Book . For the chapter fifteen project both partners must think of funny events that happened in the past and talk about them. The other partner will react to the story with what he/she would, might, may, or could do. The other partner will tell about another funny incident that happened and ask for advice. The partners then need to change roles. The presentation must include modal auxiliary verbs and unreal conditions and modal auxiliary verbs and present perfect with unreal conditions. In the chapter sixteen conversation, one partner invites the other partner to do something. The partner being invited needs to make an excuse about why he or she can't join the first partner. The second or third group member is the narrator and tells the audience what was said using reported statements. The funnier the excuse the invitee gives the inviter the better the grade could be. The

students must use all of the expressions on the right-hand side of the chapter sixteen vocabulary page T-191 in the second *Interchange Student Book*.

The English 5 final exam is both cumulative and comprehensive. Like the two partial written exams there are three sections. The difference is on the final exam every section is longer. The first listening section is about people's vacations. There is a combination of listening comprehension and fill in the blanks. The second listening section is about jobs, alternatives, and problems and advice following the same form as the first listening section. The grammar and usage sections include two items about the past continuous versus the past simple and when to use present participles and past participles to discuss things and people. The following sections include items regarding permission, obligations, and prohibition followed by reported speech. The final grammar section includes some fill in the blank sections about time expressions, clauses with because, the passive voice formation, and a small section about modal auxiliary verbs and adverb. The exam concludes with two reading comprehension sections. One reading is about body language and signals. The other is about jobs and advice. The final exam extra credit section is worth up to three points where the students have to correct errors in a provided sentence as they did on the partial two written exam.

### **Information about Instruction**

This method of teaching English 5 is in its developmental stages as my colleagues and I are getting accustomed to teaching TOEFL preparation centered classes. Although TOEFL preparation is an aspect of our instruction format, my colleagues and I are still very highly encouraged to use supplementary and additional materials in our respective EFL classroom instruction. As my instructional unit for this capstone project is based on

vocabulary study, recognition, and production. I have the students read things outloud even if they are example sentences from the textbook. I also encourage the students to form examples using the vocabulary items and grammar structures on their own. As time and the students' proficiency permits, I really like to have the students participate in five to seven minutes English only time where they have to talk about either a topic I assign them or a group decided topic and they must use vocabulary words and expressions related to our area of study.

As is also the case in many teaching environments not all kinds of materials may lend themselves to the resources available, or their may not be adequate time to use something that (a) the students would enjoy the most (b) would portray the point or idea in the most ideal manner or (c) the students may not be mature enough to handle such activities. That being said I really like using the projectors in the classroom to show powerpoint`s that help the students practice or videos from the internet. At a university without wifi in the classrooms showing videos off of the internet can be difficult. On most days I make use of student speaking activities, listening activities from the *Interchange* text books and reading activities from the internet according to the students' reading levels and varying English proficiency levels.

### **Project Contributions**

This whole capstone has sought to contribute to helping students learn vocabulary outside of the classroom. All teachers have the problems of running out of time to cover some material or complete some activity. This chapter has provided other ideas to help students and teachers make vocabulary instruction more efficient, effective, and valuable

for all parties involved whether they are students at different proficiency levels or instructors of different levels or forms of English.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter three has explained the general objectives of English 5 that the students in their fifth semester of English and a Foreign Language at a university in Mexico must achieve. It explains the assessment procedures that allow my colleagues and me to ensure that students meet objectives as illustrated in working backward template of *Understanding By Design* on which this unit and project is based. Chapter three also explained some methods of instruction and classroom interaction that help the students meet all established objectives set forth in the second Interchange Book from the beginning of chapter 9 through the end of chapter 16.

Chapter four concludes the capstone project. In chapter four I re-examine the needs of adult learners, explain a short synthesis of why vocabulary development in adult ESL learners is important as well as ways to help students study, learn and retain vocabulary items and expressions outside of the instructional environments. I conclude this chapter and this capstone by reflecting on my experience writing this paper and completing this instructional unit. I also examine any possible research projects I might pursue in the future after I have completed my Hamline coursework as part of this Masters of Arts in Adult English as a Second Language degree.

## CHAPTER 4

### Reflection and Conclusion

#### Introduction

The purpose of this project is to discover, what research has found to be effective vocabulary instruction strategies to help English Foreign Language (EFL) students retain vocabulary items outside of the classroom. The other question is what are some affective vocabulary study strategies to teach EFL students to use that will help them retain vocabulary items outside of the EFL classroom? This paper and project by no means took a direct route. I teach EFL to low income university students with lower English proficiency. When I commenced the research process I wanted to collect data about my Mexican university EFL learners' vocabulary study habits outside of the classroom. About five months into the research process, having not yet completed the literature review or description chapter of my research proposal my thesis advisor very wisely recommended that I complete a project capstone that concludes at the end of a semester and is guided by an advisor instead of an extensive capstone thesis the seemed to become less and less feasible as time progressed. So, because I was and am, eager to complete an interesting, applicable and easier capstone experience, I decided to complete a capstone project.

#### Chapter Overview

In this chapter I explain what I learned as a researcher, learner, and writer. I also explain some important articles and authors whose work contributed information regarding language learning and instruction methods for vocabulary instruction and reinforcement in and outside of formal classroom environments. Following a summary of the literature review, I explain what could happen as a result of my project for

individual EFL instructors, EFL departments, or full EFL learning institutions. I then explain some potential limits of the project when implemented by different instructors and in different instructional environments. The chapter concludes by explaining how this project contributes to the EFL education profession related to administrations, instructors, researchers, and students.

### **Learnings throughout the Project Process**

There are many aspects of the capstone project that impart knowledge and wisdom. As a person this project process emphasized that I need to increase my persistence in the research process. The first part of the process I was only finding empirical studies instead of research reviews and research overviews provided by authors who have read and analyzed empirical studies. As a writer I figured to how much I can benefit from having people like my peer reviewer Sarah Murphy and content expert Robert Hobbs, consultants at the Hamline Writing Center and my capstone project course small group helping me revise my work and as a result help me improve my writing exponentially.

As I stated earlier, I started this capstone process by attempting a data collection thesis, for which I envisioned the sections about vocabulary study strategy use of EFL students around the world as being equally as important as the section that explains the importance of vocabulary study strategies. The section about the importance of vocabulary study strategies is still important however, the section about who the adult EFL learners are and their differing needs proved to be of more foundational importance. Finn cites many significant differences between adult learners and young learners. For example, adult learners tend to be more self-directed or internally motivated, whereas

children require constant supervision and must be continually motivated. Finn (2011) also states that more often than children, adult learners tend to be more successful when they know why they need to know what they are learning in the classroom. (2011 p. 37)

I also cover vocabulary instruction methods that teachers can use in classes with as many as 30 students. Takoc (2008) recommends using visual aids like pictures and realia that allows the students to use the vocabulary and information in ways that are useful to them. Gullberg (2008) and Tellier (2007) found that the repeated use of pictures and hand gestures helps students understand different concrete concepts like adjectives and verbs. During reading activities, Nation (2001) and Walters (2004) recommend having students guess word meanings from context which can then help other classmates grasp the idea of the reading passage being discussed should confusion arise. There are many other ways teachers can introduce students to new unfamiliar vocabulary. The teachers` vocabulary reinforcement and in class instruction can also be very helpful to students when they are studying the lexical items outside of the classroom. Many of my colleagues at Universidad de La Sierra Sur (UNISIS) have noticed that teaching any language is more frequently an art than a science. With that in mind, two quotes from Dixon (2011) that have had the most impact on me throughout the writing of this paper. Dixon (2011) states that, "There is no one best way for a learner to learn a language" (2012 p 36) Dixon (2011) and that, "No one strategy is going to work for every student 100% of the time. (2012, p. 36).

### **Implications and Limitations of my Project**

There are many factors that affect any implications or results of an instructional unit that happens during any semester. Knowing the exact results of instruction is almost



impossible to accomplish. The goal of this unit is to provide English 5 students with ample vocabulary and enjoyable ways to help them remember target vocabulary and to ensure that the students feel comfortable using the target lexical items. I would also hope that the students are able to recognize words they've seen prior to this instruction date and remember them as superficially as its meaning in their native language to as in depth as knowing and understanding why it means what it means both in English and in their native language.

Where there are possible results of the project and instructional units, there are also many potential limitations. Some limitations that my colleagues and I battle every day and every semester include, particularly at the beginning of the course, the unstable classes and class sizes. Throughout the course there are also always going to be limited resources such as technology. Most of the classrooms have projectors however, the projectors' batteries or light bulbs don't always work properly. There are also limitations brought about by the instructor and students. The students may not be adequately prepared, for whatever reason, to continue with the next lesson. There may not be a teacher to conduct the class if I am away from the classroom. As a result, I may decide to skip over that intended instruction session and cover those concepts at a later date. There could be many limitations, which is why the best advice for being an instructor of any age group is "always have a plan B." I also like to pass that advice along whenever I get an opportunity.

### **Further Research Possibilities**

A common expression is that "the first step of a journey is always the hardest. This research project can be a great starting point to a whole number of different projects.

In this project I researched different strategies students can use outside of the classroom to improve their vocabulary. Other researchers and/or academics can conduct the same or a similar process to investigate reading, listening, speaking, writing, and even a decided upon grammar skill improvement strategy for a specific grammar skill. Another instructor could also investigate EFL learners' needs and design a unit for any other 7 chapters of the *Interchange* student book series or other series like *American Headway* or *Side By Side*. Another instructor can write a unit intended for young learners or another ethnic group anywhere in the world. If there is research and information available in the world about second or foreign language acquisition, development, study strategies, and the world's language learners then the possibilities for other research projects like this one are endless.

### **Result Communication**

I am using the completed project format as a test run, but there's no reason I couldn't guide other English 5 teachers in its use with their classes. I can also communicate its use with other teachers at UNSIS about how to implement it with students in other semesters of English. I can also help the teachers who teach Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam preparation classes implement it into their exam preparation classes. Every July, UNSIS hosts a teacher workshop which local Mexican highschool English teachers attend, I can present the results and project form to the teachers who attend. I can also communicate what I have done with this project in other international teaching posts. Finally, I could use the results and format to build another project related to a different level of proficiency or for learners with different goals for learning English.

### **Contribution to Adult EFL Education Programs**

The full project with all its components can be of immense help to the profession. Universities and adult EFL instructional programs can implement the unit, findings, and ideas into their varying programs. First time teachers can also use it to complement their teaching toolbox. Teachers who have used it and enjoy it can explain it to other teachers either in informal interactions or as part of formal educational workshops or other educational gatherings with aims for professional development to serve their university or adult English learners. This project can be very useful at all levels of English language development and improvement and usage.

### **Conclusion**

This capstone process was not a direct process. Like many processes, it had its turns and chances for self-improvement along the way. The first learning chance occurred when I figured out that the capstone thesis I was attempting was too big for me to do in three terms. My desire for this project was to use my students, my instructional styles, and resources I have available to improve my students' vocabulary study and usage skills. Considering time, students, and resources, I decided to design an instructional unit for EFL learners vocabulary instruction and study. As I completed the literature review, I learned what other teachers had used in their EFL classrooms, the needs of different learners, and most importantly about citations and quotes as they relate to American Psychology Association (APA) formatting. There are many possible next steps for this project which I explain in the section that follows the literature review overview. I conclude this chapter by explaining possible results, limitations, and

professional contributions this paper and unit design make to the field of adult EFL education.

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